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Alaska Department of Fish and Game Announces 2018 Southeast Chinook Salmon Forecasts and Draft Board of Fisheries Action Plans

December 22, 2017, Juneau — The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) has completed 2018 Chinook salmon run forecasts for Situk, Chilkat, Taku, Stikine, and Unuk Rivers. These forecasts use sibling models in which the runs seen in 2016 and 2017, representing production from spawning events in 2012 and 2013, were used to predict the total cumulative run of 5 and 6-year-old fish in 2018.

The forecasts are as follows (in numbers of Chinook salmon):

Chinook Stock	2018 Run Forecast	Avg Run (07-16)	2017 Escapement ^a	Escapement goal range	
				Lower	Upper
Situk	730	660	1,187	450	1,050
Chilkat	1,030	2,830	1,231	1,750	3,500
Taku	4,700	28,700	7,000	19,000	36,000
Stikine	6,900	24,550	10,000	14,000	28,000
Unuk	865	3,780	1,203	1,800	3,800
King Salmon ^b	n/a	n/a	85	120	240

^a Escapement values in 2017 are preliminary

^b Harvest and run are not assessed for the King Salmon River stock and only escapement is available annually

With the exception of the Situk River, where the 2018 Chinook salmon forecast is slightly above the recent 10-year average, these forecasts project the lowest runs on record using historical information spanning many decades. Inseason estimates and associated run projections produced in the spring and summer of 2018 will ultimately supersede these forecasts.

Reduced productivity of Chinook salmon stocks is a major concern in Southeast Alaska and select areas of the state. This information is being provided to raise public awareness of poor 2018

Chinook salmon forecasts and provide notice the department intends to manage 2018 fisheries that encounter Chinook salmon in a conservative manner.

During the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) work session in October 2017, the department provided stock status updates for Southeast Alaska salmon stocks including Chinook salmon stocks listed above. The update included an evaluation of salmon stocks relative to guidance contained in the *Policy for the management of sustainable salmon fisheries*. Based on that evaluation, the department recommended to the board that Unuk River, King Salmon River, and Chilkat River Chinook salmon stocks be adopted as stocks of “management concern” and received concurrence on that recommendation from the board.

In response to these stock of concern recommendations, the department drafted action plans describing recommended management measures to reduce harvest of these stocks and criteria for eliminating stock of concern status. These action plans are available for review on the Alaska Board of Fisheries website (see links below). Draft action plans are being provided prior to the board public comment deadline (5:00 p.m. December 28, 2017) to allow public consideration of the department’s recommendations and provide opportunity for thoughtful engagement prior to and during the board’s Southeast and Yakutat Finfish meeting in Sitka, Alaska (January 15-23, 2018). For more information about the Board of Fisheries meeting and how you can participate, please visit the [Board of Fisheries January 11, 2018 Meeting](#) page.

It is important to note that while other Southeast Alaska Chinook salmon stocks, including Stikine, Taku, and Situk river stocks, are not designated stocks of concern based on *Policy for the management of sustainable salmon fisheries* criteria, low abundance of these stocks warrants very conservative fishery management in the near term. Management actions to conserve those stocks will also be considered during the January 2018 board meeting in Sitka.

Links to Southeast Alaska Chinook salmon action plans:

Chilkat River and King Salmon River King Salmon Stock Status and Action Plan, 2018:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2017-2018/se/chilkatAP.pdf>

Unuk River King Salmon Stock Status and Action Plan, 2018:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2017-2018/se/unukAP.pdf>

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